



"Connect"

OUTDOOR YOUTH CONNECTION™

Stories from Participants

"Empower"

"Inspire"



Youth & Leaders
Community &
Empowerment

The Office of Community Involvement Attend the LA CLASS Parks Teen Summit

By: Chelsea Rodgers

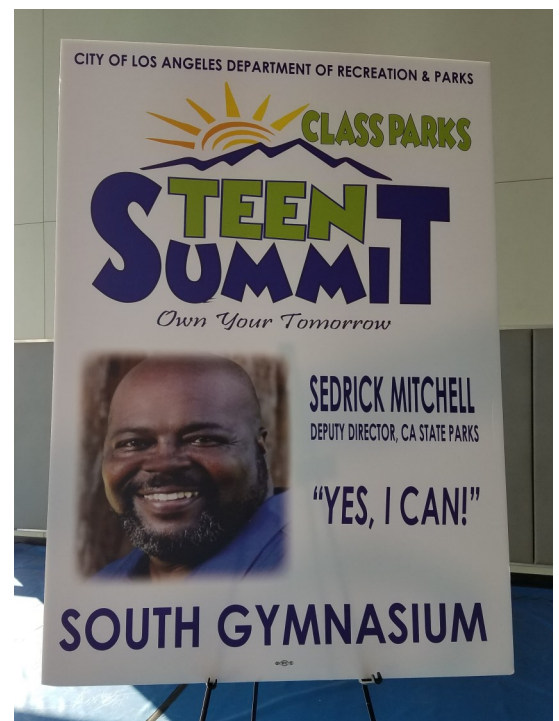
CA State Parks Deputy Director Sedrick Mitchell and the Office of Community Involvement (OCI) team were invited to speak at the 2nd Annual LA CLASS Parks Teen Summit held on February 9th, 2019.



From the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, the CLASS Parks program provides safe, educational, recreational, and adventure-based initiatives for youth who attend the 37 teen clubs spread throughout the 184 recreation centers. The theme of this year's Teen Summit was "*Own Your Tomorrow*" with the goal being to assist the youth in understanding that they truly have the ability to control their future and achieve their aspirations. One encouragement statement of the

Summit was "Yes, I Can" which happens to be the motto of the Outdoor Youth Connection (OYC), a leadership program implemented by the Office of Community Involvement. The OCI team spent the day leading over 500 youth in engaging, confidence building, and leadership oriented activities.

Similar to the OYC trainings, these youth came from many different organizations all over the Los Angeles area. As a result, most did not know each other prior to this event. A huge component of being able to successfully impact the youth, is being able to successfully engage them. After a few moments of uncertainty and reservation, the OCI team was able to encourage the youth to feel comfortable and confident enough to not only participate and have fun, but to become fully engaged and receptive of the "Yes, I Can" message. At the end of this event, teens were noted speaking of how many new friends they had made and how much fun they had thanks to the efforts of the OCI team.





City of Los Angeles- Department of Recreation and Parks

By Jeran Bogle, Senior Recreation Director

Summer of 2018, staff from the City of Los Angeles, Department of Recreation and Parks' CLASS Parks Teen Program participated in the Outdoor Recreation Leadership Training at Castaic Lake. The training granted us the opportunity to learn new and unique approaches to enhance the way we engage teens we work with on a daily basis. The team building and leadership component was extremely beneficial as the practices and skills that were covered can be put to use both professionally and personally. The entire experience as a whole exceeded our expectations.

This experience was the first time camping for one of our staff members. The training opened his eyes to the wonderful world of the outdoors. He is now able to pass these experiences on to the communities that we work with as well as educating his own family about all of the benefits of being outdoors and experiencing everything nature has to offer.



Having now completed the training, we are excited about being eligible to take part in the FamCamp Program. Since we provide year round programming for teens ages 11-17 in underserved areas, the FamCamp Program will give us the tools and equipment to provide beneficial outdoor experiences for the youth we serve.

The CLASS Parks Teen Program staff also participated in the Outdoor Youth Connection training at Castaic Lake with 21 teens from our program. This was the first time tent camping for the majority of our teens. Not only did they learn the basics of camping, Sedrick and his staff provided them with the tools and skills to be better leaders both in their community and at home. Sedrick and his staff left our teens with a better understanding of themselves and the positive impact that they can make on everyone around them.

Both of the camping trips provided a great opportunity to meet and network with staff from other cities and organizations that are providing similar programs for teens in their community. The ability to share success stories and ideas was revitalizing and reminded us why we do what we do, and the positive impact that we have on the communities we serve!



Summer 2018 Youth and Adult Leadership Programs Conclude

By: Chelsea Rodgers

The Office of Community Involvement (OCI) has officially completed all Outdoor Recreation Leadership (ORL) and Outdoor Youth Connection (OYC) trainings for the summer of 2018.



The Outdoor Recreation Leadership training programs were held at San Luis Reservoir State Park and Castaic Lake State Recreation Area. Adult leaders, from non-profit and public agencies, were given the tools necessary to plan and lead nature-based recreation activities for communities that do not typically have access to such experiences or environments. In addition to providing trainees with basic camping knowledge, the program also assists in the development of leadership, personal empowerment, and communication skills.

Graduates are then free to utilize the award-winning FamCamp® Program in which they are granted access to camping equipment and a campsite for their organization to enjoy at a participating State Park. Program graduates also plan and lead outdoor adventures such as day hiking, kayaking, and cycling. Aside from the training elements, personal bonds between the adult leaders formed quickly this summer. By the end of the 2 night and 3 day program, these participants were exchanging information, parting gifts, and making plans to work with each other's organizations in the future.

“The entire experience as a whole exceeded our expectations...The ability to share success stories and ideas was revitalizing and reminded us why we do what we do, and the positive impact that we have on the communities we serve!”

— Jeran Bogel, *City of LA Rec & Park*





The Outdoor Youth Connection trainings were also held at Castaic Lake SRA and San Luis Reservoir SP. Similar to the ORL program, the interactive OYC training was designed to enable youth from the most underserved communities in California with self-confidence, communication, leadership, and camping skills that they are able to take home to their communities and pay

forward. The OCI staff also teaches participants how to properly use propane stoves and lanterns, to prepare meals, and to set up and break down tents. Youth of ages 13 to 17 years old are encouraged to plan, organize, and carry out their own adventures. Through exciting outdoor recreation like kayaking, fishing, and constructive leadership based activities, these promising teens learn to become mentors and pioneers in their communities.

The OCI team leads this program in a way that allows youth to feel comfortable and confident enough to not just simply tolerate one another, but to work positively together and form long term bonds. A common sight to see at the end of the 3 day and 2 night program is groups of teens, strangers just days ago, exchanging phone numbers and taking photos together. The staff also conducted a survey at the end of



each program this year. Many of the youth mention that they had ultimately found a new respect for the outdoors, for themselves, and for others, despite the challenges. Nearly 300 youth and adults participated in the five OYC trainings this summer. Participants traveled from areas such as Long Beach, Los Angeles, Victorville, Richmond, Marin County, Vacaville, and Fresno.

“Because of this camp I learned I can encourage others to have a positive lifestyle and teach them to believe in themselves because they can do anything that they put their minds to. I’ve learned that I’m very positive and confident and I have passion for what I do!”

-Southern California Youth Participant



Outdoor Youth Connection (OYC) Graduates Return to Inspire



Christopher Rodriguez and Elmer Ayala have been friends for as long as they can remember. Both grew up in South Sacramento and were members of the Washington Neighborhood Center in Downtown Sacramento, where, in 2007, they discovered the OYC Program. Both graduated from college and together started their careers with California State Parks.



Christopher's Story:

"My dad was on the board for the Washington Neighborhood Center, and my mom works in a health clinic for Native Americans. They both taught me the value of education and the importance of giving back to the community through volunteer work. I had a memorable time. However, the true feat of my OYC experience was planning and leading a service project for the community. I was excited to know that I could help out further with the program and become a "Youth Council Member." This meant that other members

and I would go back to future trainings to help out in whatever ways we could; this was a great way of meeting new people from all over. We helped out for the next few years in several trainings/events that ranged from a beach play day in Huntington Beach or training at Mt. Diablo.

After graduating high school I attended San Francisco State University where I graduated with my Bachelors of Science degree in Civil Engineering. My education, my support from my family, and programs like OYC helped me get there. More specifically, OYC helped me tap into positive thinking and leadership roles. Project planning, communicating with peers, and being open minded played key roles in my studies and as me as a person in general. At trainings, I can look at the youth and see me and my friends in the same position; it wasn't too long ago when we were in the same position. It makes me excited to see them be excited with what they are doing at training and being enthusiastic in what they can do for their community and in the future."



Elmer's Story:

"My mother always stressed how important education was to me and my younger sister. I discovered the OYC program while volunteering at the Washington Neighborhood Center in downtown Sacramento, and it was through them that I was able to participate in OYC. From that point on - I was hooked. I began to be active in my community and attempted to make

changes. We threw a neighborhood block party soon after at the center in an attempt to offer a safer option for families, kids, and teens other than getting into trouble. We offered arts and crafts, a basketball tournament, food and drinks, our own version of a game show for everyone to participate in, and overall it was very much a success.

From there I went on to Sacramento City College for 3 years and eventually transferred to California State University East Bay out in Hayward, CA. I thoroughly enjoyed studying in the Bay Area. During my tenure there I looked to give back to my community just like I did with OYC before, and eventually I joined Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity Inc. before I graduated. One of the things we pride ourselves on is giving back to the community through community service, and one of the best examples of that so far was building a playground by hand for the Salvation Army in Hayward. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzBUXUOPzkY>.



Making Me a Strong Leader and Community Activist

By Aranzasu Caballero

FamCamp gives me the opportunity to get out of my usual boring routine. My mom doesn't like me going out of the house too much. Mostly due to how the area is. I like going to Calaveras State park because I am able to go for a morning jog with no worries. The morning hikes through those giant trees is something I look forward to for a whole year. I might hike with a group on those mornings but in our thoughts, we're all alone. Taking in the scenery and just taking in the free air. Duarte is a great place, but for being such a small town, it feels so good to just get away for a while. FamCamp has been a great resource that I have been able to use in my life. I want to grow and explore what this world has to offer so that I can come back to Duarte and give back to the community that helped me grow.



Something I want from this program is to introduce a new kid into it. One day they might even follow in my footsteps. A big part about the FamCamp program is that this new kid will have to learn is that with all the beautiful places, there will always be something new that they have to try. My first trip to Malibu Creek had me learn how to be a member of the team. It also taught me to speak up when a problem starts to arise. The older members in our after school program were in charge of us while we were there. So when I was old enough, I went to OYC (Outdoor Youth Connection) which was the training that gave us the access to the FamCamp equipment. We set up the lanterns and the stoves that are connected to gas cans. We set up our tents along with our sleeping bags and sleeping mats. In between the three days that we are there for, we play team building games and we even go kayaking for a bit. At the end of the three days, we get a certificate from the program and are officially able to use the FamCamp Camp trailers where they are available.

The trips had also taught me that my parents won't always be by my side to help me. They can't always be there to fix my mistakes. I have to do things on my own and fix my own problems. Like I said before, my first trip with the program had me in a team as just a member. Our leaders were the veterans of the program. But after the OYC training, I had seen myself only as a leader and nothing else. I was given the motivation to speak up more and learn from the mistakes of others as well as my own. I feel as though I have matured through the few years that I have been here. Giving a teenager like me the power over my peers is something that can be hit or miss. In my case, I think it was a homerun.

I have camped with people older than me. I camped with people younger with me. I camped with people my own age. I have the opportunity to camp with kids from other cities.

Now I have friends from Hawaiian gardens, East Los Angeles, West Hollywood, Walnut and Oxnard among others. Friends that I talk to till this very day.

Some of the campsites that my YAL have stayed at are Malibu creek, Castaic Lake, Leo Carrillo state beach, Calaveras big tree state park, Silverwood, San Simeon state park. They are all really pretty, and have their own unique features but my favorite is Leo Carrillo because we are able to walk to the beach in the morning and it is something I will never forget it is a beautiful experience.

Thanks to FamCamp I have learned to live in the outdoors without cell phone services which is something that teens today know nothing about. There's nothing I would change about FamCamp I have had many great experiences. FamCamp Camp is a great program and I hope I am still able to go on a lot more camping trips in new places with my YAL.



Memories and the Outdoors

Deputy Arthur Valenzuela

Los Angeles County Sheriff Department

Temple Station Youth Activities League

The partnership with California State Parks FamCamp program has become one of my strongest outreach programs working with at-risk male and females between the ages of 7-17 with and demographic break down of approximately 90% Latino/Hispanic, 10% Black/African American, all youth served are classified lower income and at-risk with a household income of less than \$30,000 per year.



FamCamp and the Outdoor Recreation Leadership Programs have allowed me to introduce the outdoors and overnight camping to youth served well promoting teamwork, leadership, self-awareness and confidence.

The program has allowed youth the opportunity to camp at Castaic Lake, Leo Carrillo State Beach, Malibu Creek State Park, San Simeon State Park and Calaveras Big Trees State Park. This opportunity wouldn't be possible without the camping equipment inside the FamCamp trailer and the campsites reserved by State Parks.

During the program I have taken youth to the beach for the first time, taught them how to swim, fish, cook, clean and look at the stars.

This is truly a unique program that instills a fondness and respect for the outdoors with many

of the youth looking forward to sharing the experience with their families and future kids.

Myself and my partners in the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department East Los Angeles, Lakewood and





BRIEF DESCRIPTION

FamCamp® is a program of the California State Parks and the California State Parks Foundation that began in 1994. It is the largest statewide program for meeting the Department's strategic initiatives for improving services to underserved low income communities, expanding urban connections and creating new recreational opportunities for community based organizations.

The goals are:

- To introduce camping to community based organizations that would otherwise not have the opportunity to have an overnight outdoor recreation experience.
- To strengthen relationships by teaching a new form of recreation.
- To promote a safe, affordable recreation activity that can include all members of the community regardless of age, race, gender, disability, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and national origin.
- To encourage the use of California State Parks by community-based organizations and to help them meet their goals for the community.

The FamCamp® program provides the participating group with a trailer containing camping equipment as well as a reserved campsite at a selected State Park. Over a dozen FamCamp® trailers are located throughout California; each one can accommodate up to 30 campers. Each trailer includes tents, stoves, lanterns, sleeping bags and propane. Participating groups need to provide their own food, personal gear, a good attitude for new experiences and a coordinator to lead the trip, and act as liaison with park staff. The groups are also responsible for the care of the equipment, and laundering the sleeping bag inserts.



How can your organization participate in FamCamp®?

FamCamp® is a program for community organizations or agencies to access State Parks. Ask your local organization to work with California State Parks, Office of Community Involvement to arrange for participation in the program.

Where is FamCamp®?

There are FamCamp® programs located throughout the State. Reservations must be made in advance by your local community organization or agency.

What does FamCamp® provide?

- A way for organizations to utilize recreation in meeting their needs and goals
- An opportunity for community organizations to recreate in an inexpensive, fun outdoor environment
- All necessary camping equipment
- A campsite in a nearby State Park

What does my community organization need to provide?

- Transportation to the Park site
- Food and personal items
- A center staff person certified thru the Outdoor Recreation Leadership training leading the trip and act as liaison with park staff

How much does FamCamp® cost?

There is no fee for FamCamp®; however, participants are required to attend the Outdoor Recreation Leadership training to receive their certification. These trainings are scheduled in early Spring.

To learn more, contact the Office of Community Involvement staff:

Statewide FamCamp Coordinator

Dolores L. Mejia California State Parks

**Office of Community Involvement 1416 9th
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Sacramento, CA 95814

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Email: Dolores.Mejia@parks.ca.gov

Please visit our website at: www.parks.ca.gov/oci to learn more about our programs.



Outdoor Recreation Leadership Training Opportunities 2019



This exciting overnight training focuses on the role of outdoor recreation in developing leadership skills. The training combines outdoor recreation leadership, youth development principles, and community building tools. There will be 3 days & 2 nights of camping starting 1:00 pm the first day, a full 2nd day, and ending at 12:00 PM on the last day.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>REGION</u>	
May 7, 8, & 9	San Luis Reservoir SRA	Northern Ca	
May 21, 22, & 23	Castaic Lake SRA	Southern Ca	

Training Topics Include:

- Role of recreation in community building
- Youth development principles and
- community improvement strategies with implementation tools and tips
- Leadership development and networking opportunities
- Outdoor recreation skill development and program planning
- Group facilitation with diverse communities
- Team building activities and opportunities to enhance programming and much more!

Upon completion

of the training, participants will receive a two year certification that provides access to take others camping through the award winning FamCamp® program!

Registration cost is \$200

per participant. Payable to CA State Parks-Office of Community Involvement, by agency check or money order due at time of registration.

Includes training materials, camping equipment, and meals.

(Payments are non-refundable)

Contact Chelsea Cooper with the Office of Community Involvement at:

Office: (916) 651-8576

E-mail: Chelsea.Cooper@parks.ca.gov

Visit our website at www.parks.ca.gov/oci to learn more about our programs!

2019 Training Opportunities



Goal: To empower youth to access the outdoors and unlock their leadership potential!

Objective: A three-day leadership training for youth ages 13 to 17 in outdoor activities, team building and leadership skills while camping at a California State Park. The youth will then use the experience and skills learned to organize a minimum of 2 events for their peers: PLAN, PREPARE, & LEAD a recreational outing & a public service project.



Registration Costs:

\$45 per person due 3 weeks prior to the training. Payments can be made by check or money order to

CA State Parks- Office of Community Involvement.

(Payments are non-refundable)

- ⇒ 3 days & 2 nights tent camping in a state park
- ⇒ Meals and camping equipment will be provided
- ⇒ Resource materials & staff support services
- ⇒ Practical experiences in organizing & leading events
- ⇒ Team building activities & outdoor adventure pursuits
- ⇒ Access to FamCamp®

DATE

LOCATION

REGION

June 11-13

Castaic Lake SRA

SoCal

June 21-23

Castaic Lake SRA

SoCal

June 25-27

Castaic Lake SRA

SoCal

July 9-11

San Luis Reservoir SRA

NorCal

August 6-8

Castaic Lake SRA

SoCal

Participating groups must provide transportation and adult chaperones during the entire event

For dates and more info, contact Chelsea Cooper with the Office of Community Involvement at (916) 651-8576 or via e-mail at Chelsea.Cooper@parks.ca.gov

Visit our website at www.parks.ca.gov/oci to learn more about our programs and like us on Facebook!

Fast Facts!

In the last 6 years:

51 Trainings



OYC provided 32 Trainings

Trainees 1,525

Adult Trainees 284

Trainee hours 54,270

5,110

FamCamp®

Youth & Adults Served

Over 150 organizations served

ORL provided 19 Trainings

303 Trainees & 9,090 Trainee hours

Office of Community Involvement
(916) 653-5454
www.parks.ca.gov/OCI

What Our Graduates are Saying...

FamCamp
Creating Quality Time for Families®



"This was a fantastic experience. I really enjoyed it and will put to use all of the leadership training. So helpful for professional as well as daily life."

ORL 2017



"Very informative for taking groups camping. Much to be learned even though I have lead trips previously."

ORL 2018

"This is such a great program! Great campsites, facilitators and activities. Excited to plan with my team and youth to use FamCamp."

ORL 2018



"It was a good experience to improve as a person, and to have fun."

OYC 2018

"This is a great program. Pushed me out of my comfort zone in a good way. I appreciate the opportunity to participate and be a part of something so great.."

OYC 2018



"OYC is one of the best camps I've ever been to."

OYC 2018



"I'm very thankful for this training. I'm happy I came and I think it's something I'm going to always remember."

OYC 2018



California State Parks

Office of Community Involvement

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Follow Us Here!

Official site: www.parks.ca.gov/OCI

Facebook: Outdoor Youth Connection CA State Parks

Instagram: @oyc_castateparks

